



Sermon Discussion Guide for Cumberland Fellowship Church Sermon Series: The Biblical Pattern: Church History – The Rise of Denominations (May 28, 2023)

This guide is a supplement to the weekly sermon. We encourage families and groups to use it. When we hear God's Word, we need to do more than listen. The bible says, "Be doers of the word, not hearers only" (James 1:22). Step 1: GATHER with your family or group. Step 2: REVIEW and DISCUSS the key points and scriptures from the sermon. Step 3: PRAY for the prayer requests shared by your family or group.

DISCUSSION STARTER

What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think of church? What were your first/early experiences of attending church? Were those positive or negative experiences in your faith journey and why?

DIGGING DEEPER 1

Read 1 Corinthians 3:1-9. At the time of the reformation there were only 2 denominations of the Christian faith. Once Christianity began to break away from government control you began to see all these denominations and divisions of Christianity breakout. What are denominations? Why did these denominations start? Do you believe denominations are good or bad? Why? Are denominations Biblical? List the 4 original denominations of the reformation. The Reformation brought about both positive and negative aspects? One of the downfalls that the Reformation produced was Denominationalism. What is denominationalism? Does it bring unity or division to God's church?

DIGGING DEEPER 2

Read Matthew 12:25; 1 Corinthians 1:10-13. Are there any mandates in Scripture for denominations? If yes, list and discuss them. What is the key Scriptural mandate for God's church, His body of believers (1 Corinthians 1:10; John 17:23)? Pastor Sam said, "Denominationalism is the result of division and separation caused by disagreements. When the body of Christ and the church is divided against itself it will not last, and it will lose its power to influence." Why do people discredit the value of church and choose not to come? Do you believe there is more disunity than unity in the church today (speaking of all churches)? Discuss. What does it mean to be a multi-denominational church? CF desires to partner with Churches to transform our community and reach the 48,000 lost people that live here. German Lutheran theologian Rupertus Meldenus said, "In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity." What does that statement mean to the church? CF's essentials are the 5 Solas (Christians are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, as revealed by Scripture alone, to the glory of God alone).

DIGGING DEEPER 3

Read Ephesians 2:14-16; Ephesians 4:1-4. What unites believers? How many churches and how many bodies of believers does Paul say there are? According to Acts 2:21 the Body of Christ is made up of who? Do you believe today's church values unity as a principle that defines the body of Christ? Why or why not? Disagreements over the interpretation of Scripture have become personal and led to arguments. This has in turn led to over 200 denominations in America alone and 45,000 worldwide. How are we as Christians called to resolve our differences while maintaining unity to a watching world? Discuss the statement, "diversity is not disunity." Pastor Sam stated that, "The Body of Christ is multi-denominational. Jesus never assigned denominational tags. The gospel of salvation by grace through faith unites believers, not divides them." Discuss this statement.

DOING THE WORD

The Bible says we need to be connected to a church, a body of believers. The Body of Christ is multi-denominational. Jesus never assigned denominational tags. The Body of Christ is made up of those who have called upon the name (Jesus) of the Lord to be saved (Acts 2:21). The gospel of salvation by grace through faith unites believers, not divides them. New life in Christ is the only basis for true unity. Born-again believers in Jesus Christ should "stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel" (Philippians 1:27). We can avoid denominationalism by allowing God's Spirit to work in us, for peace is a fruit of the Spirit of Christ (Galatians 5:22). Let's pray for discernment and graciously strive for unity and love with all that know Christ without compromising the gospel or minimizing important truth!